

THE SPIRITUAL ISSUES OF THE WAR

This bulletin is published for readers at home and abroad by the Religious Division of the Ministry of Information, London, to elucidate the spiritual issues at stake in the war, and to provide information concerning the British Churches in wartime, as well as their contribution to post-war reconstruction.

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STORIES FROM THE BATTLE-FRONT

A number of stories from the battle-front have reached us recently, most of them dealing directly or indirectly with the work of chaplains. We print a number of them.

A Chaplain's Heroic Death

The Rev. J. A. Newson, who was in charge of Acton and Little Waldingfield (Suffolk) before becoming a chaplain to the Forces in 1941, has been drowned off Normandy.

He was trying to save two men in difficulties in a rough sea.

He was curate of St. John's, Bury St. Edmunds, before going to Acton and Little Waldingfield.

A Padre Who Would Not Go Home

Padre Griffiths disobeyed an order and got away with it. When he was wounded in the shoulder at Bretteville some time ago everyone except Padre Griffiths knew that the wound was a "Blighty."

He was ordered to be evacuated to England but somehow prevailed upon the hospital authorities to allow him to remain in France.

After only three days with his Battalion he is again in hospital. This time he has had to come to England.

An officer of his Battalion said: "I don't think Padre Griffiths will talk his way out of this one."

When first wounded at Bretteville, Padre Griffiths, being weak from loss of blood, had to be ordered to hospital. He travelled with two badly wounded men to the R.A.P. On the journey from the line the ambulance was strafed, but he comforted and cheered the wounded and urged the driver on.

An officer friend of the Padre's told a reporter:—

"In hospital he argued with the doctors and the nurses, with the medical orderlies and with visitors; in fact, he made a general nuisance of himself to everybody, with the sole object of getting out of hospital at the earliest moment. Even then he left before his wounds were properly healed.

"On August 4th the Brigadier was addressing all ranks, telling them what had been achieved so far and what battles had yet to be fought. The men were listening attentively when suddenly there was a tremendous cheer. Someone had seen Padre Griffiths ride into the field on his famous old Paratroop bike, and the men cheered him again and again. Well, he stayed with us three days before he got another packet, this time in the foot during heavy mortaring and shelling of a Battalion H.Q.

"Perhaps this time he will have to obey orders and go to England for a spell. But, the moment he returns on his old Paratroop bike, there will be mighty cheers ringing the air again. For Padre Griffiths is a brave and a very popular man."

Killed By Their Own Propaganda

"If this German dies, he will have been killed by German propaganda."

The speaker was a major of the Royal Army Medical Corps in 33rd Casualty Clearing Station a few miles behind the forward troops of the 3rd British Infantry Division in Normandy.

The prisoner was wounded in the chest. His condition was serious. He was a good-looking lad of about 19 and is believed to have come from the Breslau district.

The R.A.M.C. major, a physician, looked

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at him and formed the opinion that he would live, if he would be a good patient. But the German was not a good patient. He made more noise than all the other patients in his ward put together. He was afraid of the British because German propaganda describes us as a race of monsters, and he had no faith in our doctors.

If his German mind could have been cured of the anti-British hate planted there by Dr. Goebbels, his life would have been saved. The best medical attention in the British Army was at his disposal, the doctors were eager and willing to save him, but he died. He was buried on August 8th.

The padres at this Casualty Clearing Station, the Rev. W. P. Cuthbert, C.F., and the Rev. J. P. Marsden, C.F., have seen many German wounded brought in.

"It is natural for a wounded prisoner of war to be a bit frightened, but some of the Germans are extraordinarily so, and this can only be put down to German hate propaganda," said Padre Cuthbert. "It is interesting sometimes to watch the disillusionment of the Germans, and occasionally it is amusing also in a way.

"For example, after one of the heavy R.A.F. raids we had some German wounded. One of them, a big blond boy of 18, in the S.S., told us about the raid. 'Plonk, plonk, plonk, R.A.F. bombs! Terrible! No Luftwaffe. Goering, boss of German Air Force, big tummy, big chest, rows of medals, yap, yap, yap. We have a big air force—on paper.'

"The other Germans around him laughed like anything," added the padre.

Padre Marsden told me of another instance.

"We had another German youngster, very sullen. I went up to his bedside, offered him a cigarette. He took it but was still sullen. Then I offered him a cup of tea, but he was suspicious, so I took a sip myself just to prove it was not doped or poisoned. Then the German had a drink, and for the first time his sullen look went away.

"The Germans are most surprised when they get decent treatment. Goodness knows what sort of horrible stories they've been told about the British. These young Germans are a problem, and the people at home ought to realise that we are going to have a big job in decontaminating the minds of German youth poisoned by propaganda."

I heard another example.

A wounded German's life was saved by a blood transfusion. He was heard to whisper, "To think that I've spent all these weeks in Normandy trying to kill British soldiers and I'm now being saved by English blood. My God!" He was grateful.

The breakdown is often pathetic. Young German soldiers have been known to burst into tears on receiving a kindness from the British.

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The Rev. W. P. Cuthbert, C.F., was formerly at St. Paul's Church, Seacombe, Wallasey, and spent most of his ordained life in Liverpool.

The Rev. J. P. Marsden, C.F., was minister at Ebeneser Congregational Church, Chat-ham, and before that at Zion Congregational Church, Wibsey, Bradford, Yorks.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

The Home Office made the following announcement on August 16th, 1944:

On the day of the first landings in France the King called his people to prayer and dedication, and expressed the hope that throughout the present crisis of the liberation of Europe there might be offered up earnest, continuous and widespread prayer, and it is the desire of His Majesty that Sunday, September 3rd, the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of war, shall again be observed as a National Day of Prayer and Dedication. Arrangements are accordingly being made to enable the national response to be as general as possible.

The leaders of the Churches have made their plans for observing the National Day of Prayer in Churches of all denominations throughout the country.

Arrangements have also been made to broadcast a religious service from 9:30 to 10:15 a.m. with an address by the Archbishop of Canterbury. From 7:45 to 8:25 p.m. a service will be broadcast from St. Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh, at which the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland will give the address, and the service will be conducted by Principal W. Holms Coats, D.D., of the Baptist Theological College of Scotland. The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster will broadcast a talk from 3:30 to 3:45 p.m. Special services will also be broadcast on the General Forces programme.

In addition special services will, so far as practicable, be arranged locally for those unable to participate in the general observance, e.g. in factories where persons are engaged on essential work on Sunday.

* * *

The Archbishop of Canterbury made the following statement on the Day of Prayer:

"Once more the King calls us to observe September 3rd, the day on which this country entered the war, as a Day of Prayer. This

year we shall observe it with thanksgiving and hopefulness.

"We shall give thanks for the successes gained by our own forces and those of our Allies, and for the leadership of our nations and of our forces, as well as for the courage and devotion of men and women in Navy, Army and Air Force, to which those successes are due.

"Let us also dedicate ourselves alike to the labour and endurance yet needed for victory and to the self-discipline and generosity of spirit by which alone, when victory is won, we can establish true peace.

"Suggestions for modifications in Church of England services will be made public later."

WILLIAM CANTUAR

BISHOP OF LICHFIELD'S MESSAGE FROM EIGHTH ARMY FRONT

The Church of England Newspaper for August 18 writes:

The Bishop of Lichfield, who is making a special visit to the Eighth Army on the Italian front, sends home to the people of his diocese an account of some of his experiences. "In the 'Church' tent," he writes, "I have just been holding a Confirmation for 16 candidates drawn mostly from the area around, including two colonels. Three of the 'other ranks' had come at least 100 miles, 'lorry-hopping' all the way, and starting at midnight from near Cassino in order to get here. Our Lord seemed very near in our simple service in such a setting. Two days ago in Rome, at the beautiful English church just reopened, I confirmed 198 soldiers, including some 20 Basutos from the large Basuto force (who are mostly Christians—one more testimony to our missionary work) working with the Pioneer Corps out here. In a short time I move on in a 'staff' car, accompanied by a 'truck' (a small lorry), with my tent, bed, and luggage, to visit and take Confirmations at two casualty clearing stations, staying the night at one of them, and moving on again to-morrow on my round of visits to other Corps and Divisions, all in this justly renowned Eighth Army. After hearing so much about this Army I count it a high privilege to live in the midst of it for some weeks and take services and Confirmations."

The Church Times for the same date adds the following interesting information:

The Bishop of Lichfield tells how, in the depths of the Italian countryside, with a grove of pine trees for a church, he confirmed a number of Maoris from New Zealand, prepared and presented by their own Maori chaplain.

"He and they, all speaking perfect English," he writes, "were fully aware of their link with our diocese, and knew all about Bishop Selwyn; and it was a keen delight to them to be confirmed by a present Bishop of Lichfield. It was a treat to hear them sing, with tone and harmony not unlike a body of Welshmen; later on, after lunch, they entertained us with some charming native Maori songs. When I get home I shall look with new interest at the stained-glass window in the Palace chapel, depicting Bishop Selwyn baptizing a Maori chieftain."

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES and AMERICAN SERVICE MEN

A Congregational Minister writes:

"Four and a half months of growing friendship with American soldiers has proved a most valuable experience for our church. Situated in a small country town, we were more than ready to welcome the American troops.

"We should like to pay tribute to the rapidity with which these boys found their way to the church, and to the keenness of the American chaplains to make friends, and to encourage all such contacts.

"From the first Sunday after their arrival until now, our services have been enriched, and our congregations increased by the presence of anything up to fifty or sixty American service men, which has meant contacts with well over a hundred. These have included members of our Congregational churches in America, Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Lutherans, members of the Church of Christ, Christian Scientists, and men of no church attachment, all of whom have joined sincerely and with obvious appreciation in our worship.

"On occasions we have held 'American' services. Lay members of the Forces have then read the lessons and have rendered vocal and instrumental solos, the choir has been 'all American' and as many as four chaplains, of different Protestant denominations, have shared in the planning and conduct of such a service of worship. On these occasions the American Forces' hymn book has been used. Such services have been greatly appreciated by the civilian and British Service members of the congregation.

"It has long been our practice to hold a social time after our Sunday evening services, when we have found opportunity to serve refreshments and to get to know one another. These times have provided ideal opportunities for making personal contacts that have led to still deeper friendships, and have also given occasion for informal talks

and discussions and for the sharing of musical evenings.

"In all this our American friends have taken full part. One remembers an evening when three men each gave a short talk on 'My Home State,' and we heard the relative claims to fame, put forward on behalf of Wisconsin, Florida and New York State.

"On more occasions than we can remember talented American boys have shared their music with us. At our socials and games evenings, held during the week, our new friends have been equally anxious to prove their good fellowship, and to accept responsibility, and British and American games have been mutually enjoyed.

"Members of the Forces have also assisted in the regular work of the church. One has become a temporary member of the choir and on occasion acts as choirmaster, others have taught in the Sunday School and still another has accepted preaching engagements in the village chapels, of which we are the mother church.

"In a kind of spiritual 'lend-lease' it has also been the minister's privilege to conduct Army services for the chaplains when illness or other circumstances have found them shorthanded.

"But many of the happiest and most fruitful contacts have been made in the homes of our church members. We all have many boys who drop in when they feel like it, and who, now that we have overcome their initial reluctance to consume our rations, often share our evening meal.

"Another home that has the facilities, often receives American help in making (and disposing of) ice cream. The manse has been initiated into the gastronomic delights of fried chicken, cooked by one of the guests. The minister's wife having protested that 'O Boy' was surely not a suitable response to make to her, is now known as 'Babe.' An R.A.F. friend of the family, who went into the kitchen of one home was surprised to find an American soldier clad in tunic and underpants, industriously ironing his trousers, and to be greeted with the heartfelt words, 'O Boy, the hospitality I've received in this house.'

"But not all our contacts have been on the level of food and fun, though they have often followed these. We have found the depths of fellowship together too. Letters have gone from the manse and other homes to American ministers and wives at home, giving news of these boys and expressing our appreciation of their Christian comradeship and fine spirit. We have been introduced by photograph and conversation to many American families and churches.

"We can only sum up our experience of these last months by saying that our new friends have become part of our church fellowship, and we are not now hosts entertaining guests, but members of the same family—friends together—one in Christ."

11th July, 1944.

JEWS IN HUNGARY: Anglo-American Pledge to Find Refuge

The following joint declaration by the British and United States Governments regarding an offer made by the Hungarian Government to the International Red Cross to release Jews from Hungary was issued on August 17th:

The International Red Cross has communicated to the Governments of the United States and United Kingdom an offer made by the Hungarian Government with regard to emigration and treatment of Jews. Because of the desperate plight of the Jews in Hungary and the overwhelming humanitarian considerations involved, the two Governments are informing the Government of Hungary through the International Red Cross that, despite the heavy difficulties and responsibilities involved, they have accepted the offer of the Hungarian Government for the release of Jews and will make arrangements for the care of such Jews leaving Hungary who reach neutral or United Nations territory, and also that they will find temporary havens of refuge where such people may live in safety.

Notification of these assurances is being given to the Governments of neutral countries, who are being requested to permit the entry of Jews who reach their frontiers from Hungary. The Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom emphasize that, in accepting the offer which has been made, they do not in any way condone the action of the Hungarian Government in forcing the emigration of Jews as an alternative to persecution and death.

BRITISH CHURCHES AND INDIAN PROBLEMS

In view of the talks between Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Jinnah, the Archbishop of Canterbury has urged upon Christian people in England the duty of praying for India at this time, that those who lead the Indian peoples may themselves be led by the Spirit of God to follow the way which leads to India's truest welfare.

Leaders of the British churches announce that the Churches' Indian Famine Relief Fund has sent £5,200 to the National Christian Council of India.